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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
1 June 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 9:00 A.M. EDT)

Saigon

1. After a relatively peaceful day in the capital yesterday, Buddhist youths were reported in the streets today in reaction to the grenade attack against Buddhist Youth Commissioner Thien Minh near the Buddhist Youth Center. An American jeep was burned nearby, and youths later placed a banner over the remains declaring that "Americans and General Ky will have to pay for the death of Thich Thien Minh." According to the press, two US servicemen were also chased down a street near the Buddhist Institute, and a Vietnamese policeman was dragged off his motor scooter and beaten.

2. Buddhist Institute chairman Tam Chau later told newsmen that he held government leaders responsible for the incident because "they do not protect the people." He said that the Buddhists were "very excited" about the attack. The Buddhist Institute also issued a written communique holding the government responsible and describing the incident as part of an anti-Buddhist plot. One Buddhist official told a US Embassy officer that the Buddhists were aware eight days ago of an assassination plot by a group opposing Buddhism. He declared that neither the government nor the Viet Cong were responsible for the incident, but alluded to another, unnamed group. In other quarters, a Saigon domestic news broadcast described the incident as the work of an extremist attempting to sabotage a potential agreement between the Buddhists and the government.

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3. After being rushed to a hospital, Thien Minh underwent a two-hour operation and received blood transfusions. According to the press, he has remained in a coma since the attack occurred, and doctors have described his condition as serious.

4. It is not yet clear whether this morning's incident will have any significant effect upon negotiations underway between the Buddhist leaders and government officials, although the issue may well be interjected in future discussions. Minh was returning from a meeting with Chief of State Thieu when the attack took place this morning, and another meeting has apparently been scheduled this afternoon. There are no details yet available on the Buddhist-government talks today.

Ky-Buddhist Talks

5. In a conversation with a US Embassy officer earlier today, Premier Ky described yesterday's meeting with Buddhist officials in very optimistic terms. He declared that the Buddhists agreed to his proposal for including civilians on the Directorate, and that they were prepared to call off the "struggle movement." He also said that the Buddhists affirmed that their decision would be binding on Tri Quang in Hue, and that "details" of an agreement would be worked out with the Buddhists by General Thieu today. According to Ky, the Buddhists made no demands relating to the resignation of his government or of individual members, such as they have in the past.

6. Following yesterday's meeting, however, Buddhist leaders gave no indication publicly that they were close to an agreement; Thien Minh reportedly declared that the inclusion of civilians on the Directorate was "not important," and re-affirmed his demand for the resignation of the government. Other reports have indicated that the Buddhists are prepared to resume their suicide campaign should they so decide. On the basis of a conversation with Buddhist representative Thich Phap Tri late this morning, US Embassy officials have reported that the Buddhists apparently have not reached any agreement with the government as yet.

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7. While attending a military ceremony in the delta area south of Saigon today, Premier Ky publicly announced that the Directorate would be broadened to include civilian representatives of political and religious groups. Ky declared that the Directorate would soon begin to receive suggestions on proposals relating to civilian additions. Earlier, Ky had asked the election law drafting council to consider the question when they finished their draft of an election law.

Hue

8. Following the burning of the US Consulate and other structures within the US compound this morning, the mob of students and other dissidents sacked the private home of province chief Khoa and two other dwellings on the same street. There have been no further reports of violence in Hue today, and no reports of any American casualties, or of dissident action against other American installations in the city.

9. [redacted] the Consulate itself was about 70 percent destroyed by fire, with adjacent buildings receiving ever heavier damage. Elements in the crowd were reportedly armed with carbines, pistols, and grenades.

10. Province chief Khoa set out for the Hue area soon after word of the incident reached him in Da Nang. However, his immediate plans for controlling any further mob action in Hue are unknown. In an earlier conversation with a US consular official, Khoa indicated that he intended to remove all regular South Vietnamese troops--whom he described as mostly sympathetic to the "struggle movement"--from the city before using force against armed students. Khoa thus hopes to avoid any battle involving loyal and dissident ARVN elements. At the present time, one infantry company of the First Division--which gave way to the crowd at the US Consulate this morning--and an engineer battalion are still in the city. US officials commented that although Khoa is loyal to the government and has good intentions, he appears to be in need of stronger backing by higher authorities before the situation in Hue can be resolved.

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11. Elsewhere this morning, dissident General Ton That Dinh met with VNAF Chief of Staff Vien at Chu Lai. Dinh described the meeting as pleasant, and remarked that he was returning to Hue to carry out some suggestions made by Vien. Upon hearing of the burning of the US Consulate, Dinh departed for Hue immediately to see what he could do about the situation.

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